

# Editorial Writing

State Meet • 2022



You are a reporter for the Leaguetown **Press**, the student newspaper of Leaguetown High School. From the given information, write an **editorial** as you would for the high school newspaper. Remember that as an editorial writer, you should support or oppose **policy or action**; you should not sermonize.

You have **45 minutes**.

Do not write your name or the name of your school on this sheet or your entry. **Put your number on your paper.**

Leaguetown High School has 2,700 students enrolled in grades 9-12. The average salary for Texas public school teachers is \$59,811, and the average starting salary for a teacher is \$45,138. The LISD school district is \$3,000 below the average salary for Texas teachers and \$3,500 below the average starting salary for Texas teachers. Leaguetown teachers did not receive raises for the past two years because of budget issues related to the pandemic and the loss of tax revenue. Superintendent Ginny Yasef has proposed the district become paperless, thus saving money that could be used for a teacher raise. During the pandemic, every student received a Chromebook for virtual school, and students are still using them.

Chief Financial Officer Joseph Shanks determined that if the district goes paperless, it can afford to give teachers a 5% raise instead of the 2% raise approved in April.

Yasef received mixed responses to her proposal. Elementary and middle school teachers overwhelmingly supported the proposal. High school teachers were split fairly evenly: 51% for and 49% against. The school board will vote on the proposal Thursday, May 12. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed Monday, May 9.

## **THOSE OPPOSING THE PROPOSAL**

Brain research from the National Learning Institute indicates that taking notes and doing class assignments on paper is more effective than taking notes or doing assignments digitally. The NLI studies also shows that low-performing students using a computer for testing guess significantly more often than they do when taking a paper-pencil test.

## **THOSE SUPPORTING THE PROPOSAL**

For an entire school year, virtual students used no paper to complete assignments and exams, and student grades did not drop compared to the previous year. This year, students still use their Chromebooks to complete assignments and tests for some classes. Shifting to paperless is better for the environment and would allow a 5% raise, which is essential to attract and retain teachers.

### ■ **GINNY YASEF, superintendent**

“Our teachers are dropping like flies. We lost 10% of our faculty during the school year, and another 15% have already turned in their resignations for the 2022-23 year. From our exit surveys, we found that 45% of those leaving found better-paying teaching jobs in nearby districts, and 24% plan to go into the private sector for better pay. The No. 1 factor for our teachers leaving is low pay. Going paperless won’t save us enough money to give the raises that teachers deserve, but it’s a start.

### ■ GINNY YASEF (cont.)

“Our students are used to a paperless environment. They did it successfully during virtual learning, and some are still doing it today. The pandemic changed the way we deliver curriculum and lessons, and we need to capitalize on that to save money.

“I understand that not all of our high school teachers agree. I get it. Change is hard, and teachers have faced a lot of change over the past two years. I plan to meet with high school teachers again on Tuesday afternoon to answer questions and explain how we can do this.”

### ■ CHARLES WILLIAM, English teacher

“Do I want a raise? Heck, yes. Do I want to go paperless to get a raise? Heck, no. I love technology. I embrace technology in my classroom, but we still need paper and pens. Many of my students do much better with writing when they can brainstorm or create outlines on paper. The English department has created great ‘brainstorming’ sheets to help our students with their essays. Researchers at Science Digest showed that the brain in both young adults and children is much more active when writing by hand than when typing on a keyboard. The use of pen and paper gives the brain more ‘hooks’ to hang memories on. Writing by hand creates much more activity in the sensorimotor parts of the brain.”

### ■ CHRISTINE LING, sophomore

“Our teachers deserve a raise, but I don’t want the school to go paperless. I struggle in math, and it was hard for me to do it only on the computer. I made mistakes when I copied problems down onto my own paper to work stuff out. This year I have performed much better in math because all of my homework and tests have been on paper.”

### ■ THEO BROWN, junior

“Working on a computer all day is murder on my eyes. I was so happy to be back in the classroom this year and off the Chromebook. I don’t mind doing some assignments on the computer, but I don’t want to do all of them that way.”

### ■ BETTI ROBLES, sophomore

“I liked doing my assignments on the Chromebooks. This year, one of my teachers lost a homework assignment. If I had done the assignment on the computer, I would not have had to do it again. I could have resubmitted the work that I had already done. The computer also keeps me more organized. Everything is in one place.”

### ■ FRED STONE, science teacher

“I am all for paperless. If teachers feel the need to use paper, they can ask their students to use their own paper. Elementary students bring supplies to school every year. High school students can do the same. Teachers need this pay raise, and I applaud Dr. Yasef for prioritizing this. During the school year, we lost two science teachers to jobs in the corporate world where they doubled their salary. Two more plan to leave this summer for higher paying districts. Our students can’t learn without teachers. They can learn without paper. We proved that during the pandemic.”

### ■ ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

If the school board adopts the proposal, the district will return 15 leased copiers scattered in schools around the district. Each school will retain one copier for office staff and emergencies.

**DO NOT PASS OUT TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING THE CONTEST****EDITORIAL WRITING STATE • 2022**  
**CONTEST TIPS AND SAMPLE EDITORIALS**

*Contest Director: Give one copy to each judge to use during critique/judging. Also, staple one copy of the contest and one copy of the contest tips to each student's returned entry. The purpose of the tips is to provide immediate feedback to students. However, it is not meant to replace written comments from the judge.*

1. Lead with a statement of the situation and then take a clear, definite staff stance. The situation is the board will vote on whether to go paperless districtwide.
2. As a general rule, use third person. If you must use a pronoun, use first person plural (we, meaning "we, the newspaper staff"). Do not use first person singular (I, me, mine) or second person (you). Avoid unnecessary use of pronouns. Rather than "We believe the board should..." write instead, "The board should."
3. Don't waddle into the editorial. Get to the point. Never ask a rhetorical questions. An editorial should answer questions, not ask them. Above all, remember that your purpose is to make thoughtful, logical arguments in support of your position. Do not rant. The editorial should not be long — 450 words at the most. When appropriate, a writer may use a clever opening to grab the readers' attention.
4. Look for the future angle. Your paper comes out before the vote.
5. Once you've stated your position/stance, the body of the story should support that stance while refuting the opposition.
6. End the editorial with a call to action or a suggested course of action if feasible and necessary.
7. Avoid direct quotes unless the quote adds substantially to the editorial. You can pull information from these quotes, as has been done in the sample editorial, but attributing that information to a source is not required unless that source has considerable credibility toward the story.
8. Watch for factual errors. Pay attention to minor details. Keep your editorial tight and focused.
9. Don't clutter up the editorial with cliches or trite phrases such as "paperless is stupid" or any variation thereof. Eliminate redundancies. Also, omit the name of the school unless it is necessary for clarity. It isn't necessary to say "Leaguetown Independent School District" or "Leaguetown High School." Students know the name of the school. They don't need to be reminded.

### **SAMPLE EDITORIAL/OPPOSING PAPERLESS**

On paper, Superintendent Ginny Yasef's proposal for the district to go paperless sounds great. Teachers get a pay raise. Trees are saved.

In reality, it could hurt students and do little to alleviate the current teacher shortage.

The school board should vote against the paperless proposal Thursday.

No doubt teachers need raises, and the board should find the money to make that happen. But the board shouldn't do it at the expense of student learning.

Paperless instruction hinders student learning. Research from the National Learning Institute indicates that taking notes and doing class assignments on paper is more effective than taking notes or doing assignments digitally. The NLI studies also showed that low-performing students using a computer for testing guess significantly more than when doing a paper version of the same test.

Students learn differently. Some students need to write on paper to retain information or solve problems. Research from Science Digest shows that brains are more active when students are writing on paper.

Yasef is going to meet with teachers on Tuesday to try to sell her paperless proposal. She shouldn't waste her time. The proposal is not good for students.

The real question is: Is a 5% increase in pay enough to stop teachers from leaving Leaguetown ISD classrooms? The district doesn't know because it hasn't asked. What is known is that almost half of the high school faculty oppose the proposal.

A 5% raise sounds good, but when teachers can leave and double their salary in the corporate world, 5% isn't much. This raise is but a tiny Band-Aid on a nationwide problem. It causes more problems than it solves.

Those who favor the proposal say because of the pandemic, students are used to paperless learning. They contend that students became accustomed to virtual learning, but that doesn't mean we should continue it.

Teachers need to be paid more. There's no debating that, but not at the expense of learning. The school board needs to reject Yasef's proposal and then go back to the drawing board to find the money to pay teachers what they deserve.

**SAMPLE EDITORIAL/SUPPORTING PAPERLESS**

One change. Two huge benefits.

Superintendent Ginny Yafef has proposed the district go paperless next year so it could afford to give teacher a well-deserved 5% raise. The change also would benefit the environment.

This proposal should be an easy “yes” for the school board when it votes Thursday.

Anything the district can do to retain and attract quality teachers must be done. In April, the board approved a measly 2% raise for teachers. The district lost 10% of its teaching staff this school year, and another 15% have already turned in their resignations for next year. Exit surveys showed that 45% of those leaving found better-paying jobs in nearby districts, while 24% are going into the private sector for better pay. This makes low pay the No. 1 factor in teacher loss.

Students can learn without paper, but they can’t learn without teachers. The pandemic proved that. During this school year, two science teachers left for higher-paying jobs in the corporate world. These kinds of mid-year losses significantly disrupt learning. If going paperless can keep teachers in the classroom, it’s worth the inconvenience.

Students already have access to the tools they need for paperless learning because every student received a Chromebook during the pandemic. In fact, many classes already ask students to use Chromebooks to complete assignments and tests. This will be a small jump for students who have already adapted to paperless learning.

Those opposed to going paperless say that it makes learning harder for some students. That may be true, but losing quality teachers hurts all students, especially if qualified replacements can’t be found. Parents can always provide paper for their students if they need it. And student can print assignments at home if they choose. It’s not so easy to replace a teacher.

The school board should approve Yassef’s proposal and prioritize its teachers.

# 2022 EDITORIAL WRITING STATE CHAMPIONS

1A

Saylor Holloway - Chireno HS

Teachers, still suffering from the pandemic, have not received raises in two years due to budget issues. Superintendent Ginny Yasef has proposed the district become paperless, thus saving money to be used for teacher raises. The school board will vote on the proposal Thursday.

This proposal is in everyone's best interests, and the school board should vote in favor of the proposal.

Chief Financial Officer Joseph Shanks determined that if the district goes paperless, it can afford to give teachers a 5% raise. This raise is mandatory for keeping educators in the district, who are dropping like flies. 10% of faculty was lost during the school year, and another 15% have already turned in their resignations for next year. The number one factor for teachers leaving is low pay. 45% of teachers leaving are chasing after better-paying jobs, and some are even considering the private sector for better pay. When so many teachers are leaving, it needs to serve as a wake-up call. The school cannot operate without educators. This raise has to happen.

During the pandemic, virtual students used no paper to complete assignments and exams, and student grades were maintained throughout. Completing assignments virtually is efficient, organized, better for the environment, and has proved to be successful. Virtual assignments are easier on students and teachers. One sophomore, whose teacher lost a paper homework assignment, agreed that if the assignment had been virtual, she would not have had to redo the homework assignment. As technology advances, the district needs to start making gradual progress as well. The pandemic and virtual learning has given the district an opportunity to not only change the way assignments are done, but to save money for raises as well.

Those who oppose the proposal might argue that subjects like math will be harder online versus on paper. However, the school is not banning paper. Students are more than welcome to bring their own school supplies, including paper, to school. In addition, the teachers will be physically present, whereas during the pandemic, students and teachers were separated. Subjects like math will be extremely doable.

Students can learn without paper, but they can't learn without teachers. The paperless proposal must be passed by the school board. Without a raise, the district is in danger of losing good educators. Going paperless is the best decision for the district, and now is the perfect opportunity to make the transition. It is essential that supporters of this proposal voice their approval at the school board meeting.

2A

Dianna Soto - Farwell HS

When Superintendent Ginny Yasef proposed to go paperless in order to save money to raise teacher wages, elementary and middle school teachers supported the proposal, but high school teachers were evenly split on the matter. The school board will vote on whether to go paperless Thursday.

The school board should vote to go paperless not only to award teachers with the pay they deserve but to give students the best education by retaining and hiring good teachers.

The school is losing good teachers because of low pay at an alarming rate. 10% of all faculty has already been lost and another 15% are resigning this year. Students can go without paper, but they can't go without teachers. The increase in teachers' pay from going paperless will help the school retain good teachers and attract great teachers so that the students may be given the best education the school can offer. Student education should be the school's top priority. Losing good teachers does not prioritize a student's education.

The opposition may say that going paperless will negatively impact students, causing them to not properly absorb information and performing worse at school. However, during the pandemic, students were forced to go paperless and student grades did not suffer. Furthermore, just because the school will not provide students does not mean paper is barred from the school. If taking notes and writing helps student retain information, they are welcome to bring their own materials. Also, a good teacher can make up for lack of paper, but note taking cannot make up for lack of a good teacher.

The school board must vote to go paperless because it is the best option not only for teachers' pay but for student education.

3A

Emily Hughitt - Comanche HS

After superintendent Ginny Yasef proposed the district to go paperless to give teachers a raise, she received mixed responses from teachers and students. The school board will vote on the proposal this Thursday.

The district should not go paperless.

Many students benefit from being able to do things on paper. Research from the NLI proves that students learn more effectively when they take notes on paper, than on the computer. Going paperless will be hard on students' abilities to learn.

Students need paper to be able to map out their ideas. They need to be able to draw and use their creativity. Classes like math and science also need paper to be able to work problems out.

Computers are great for classes, but they can be a hassle. They are more difficult to use and can be a big distraction. If all classrooms are using computers, they wifi will also be slow. All of these computer issues will make it harder for students to finish their assignments.

Many teachers believe that going paperless will be easy, because of the recent virtual school years. However, students' grades dropped drastically during those times due to issues with technology.

Instead of getting rid of all paper, the district should try to cut down on paper use. They could limit the amount of paper used weekly, or they could limit paper to only certain classes.

The school should also look for other ways to cut down on money, so they can raise the salary for teachers. They should not go completely paperless to save money. They need to find an option that will not affect students' learning abilities.

The school board should vote against the proposal to go paperless.



4A

Vivi Lehman - Lindale HS

The school board will vote Thursday on whether to support superintendent Ginny Yasef's proposal for the district to go paperless. The money saved from the proposal would go toward raising teachers' salaries by 5%.

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Due to budget issues and loss of tax revenue, the LISD school district currently pays \$3,000 below the average starting salary for Texas teachers, and the difference in paychecks shows. This year alone, the district lost 10% of its faculty, with another 15% turning in resignations for the next year. Exit surveys revealed 45% found better pay in other teaching districts, and 24% found the same in the private sector. With the No. 1 cause of resignation being low pay, the district must do something in order to retain and attract new teachers. If it does not, the district runs the risk of a major staffing shortage, which would lower the quality of teaching at its schools. The most important duty of the school is to provide the best education it can to students, and that starts with the teachers.

Going paperless would be fairly easy to do since the start of the pandemic. Every student has already received a Chromebook, so the school would not have to purchase any extra technology when switching to an online platform. Going paperless would also be helpful to both students and the environment. Less paper means less waste, and it also means less of a chance for homework to get lost in the void of someone's backpack or locker. Switching to Chromebooks would save the school much-needed money and allow students keep tracks of their work with ease.

Those who oppose going paperless point to the fact that research by the Nation Learning Institute has shown paper notes to be more effective than digital ones. However, going virtual during the pandemic did not cause grades to drop compared to the previous year, and students have continued to use their Chromebooks this year as well with little issue. Students have shown their ability to learn without paper, but one thing students still cannot go without is teachers. If some teachers want to keep paper in their classrooms, they can ask students to bring their own; elementary schools do this already, so other grades could too.

The school board should implement the superintendent's proposal for the betterment of the district and its students.

5A

Rachel Sadler - Princeton HS

After teachers did not receive raises for the past two years because of budget issues related to the pandemic, Superintendent Ginny Yasef proposed that the district shift to paperless to help save money that could go toward teacher pay. While the proposal was supported by elementary and middle school teachers, not all high school teachers agree on the proposal. Yasef said she will meet with the high school teachers on Tuesday to answer questions and explain how the proposal works before the school board votes on it Thursday.

The school board should approve the proposal to go paperless to have more funds for teachers.

The district lost 10% of the faculty during the school year, and another 15% have already turned in their resignations for the 2022-2023 school year. An exit survey showed that 45% of those leaving found better-paying teaching jobs in nearby districts, and that the No. 1 factor for teachers leaving is low pay. The school district is \$3,000 below the average salary for Texas teachers and \$3,500 below the average starting salary for Texas teachers. Shifting to paperless would allow a 5% raise for teachers, which isn't what they deserve, but it's a start.

In addition, the students are used to a paperless environment from the pandemic. During the pandemic, every student received a Chromebook for virtual school, and students are still using them to complete assignments and tests for some classes. Students were successful in virtual learning, and grades did not drop compared to previous years. The pandemic changed the way the district delivered curriculum and lessons, and the district should take advantage of that to save money.

Research from the National Learning Institute indicates that taking notes and doing class assignments on paper is more effective than doing them digitally. While this is true, the proposal does not say that students can't use paper, it simply states that the district will not provide it. If students want to use paper for assignments and notes they can bring their own. Elementary students bring their own supplies every year, so there is no reason high school students couldn't do the same.

The district should approve the proposal to shift to paperless and save money for a teacher raise. The district needs to realize that students can learn without paper, but they can't learn without a teacher.

In order to offer teachers a higher raise, Superintendent Ginny Yasef proposed that the district save money by going paperless. The school board will vote on this proposal Thursday. Teachers are leaving in search of higher paying jobs in nearby districts. There are mixed reviews among teachers about this plan.

The school board should vote against Yasef's proposal to go completely paperless.

Going paperless would have many other effects than just not doing work on paper. Studies from the national Learning Institution show that taking notes and doing assignments on paper can be better for students because it allows them to be more effective. Doing work on paper can be easier to deal with in areas such as math. Solving an equation by writing everything out is easier to understand than using an online program where you might not be able to write out the steps.

Another concern about using computers instead of paper is eye strain. When people stare at computer screens all day, it can cause eye strain, headaches, and other problems that can limit their ability to think. It's hard to take a test when you have a splitting headache.

This isn't just a problem for students. Teachers have already created worksheets to help with brainstorming and other things. It is unwise to make that work go to waste and to ask teachers to recreate their lessons with only technology.

Those who want this paperless proposal to go through talk about how teachers need a raise. The district lost 10% of its teachers during the school year, and 15% more turned in their resignation for next year. Teacher pay is a problem, but going paperless isn't the way to solve it because of how it affects both the students, and the teachers. Yasef said that going paperless alone is not enough to fix the teacher pay problem. There are other ways to save money that aren't detrimental to teachers' and students' workflow.

One such solution is holding a fundraiser. Selling things like chocolate or popcorn, or simply asking for donations is a good place to start. If going paperless is appealing to some teachers, there could be an incentive to use less paper for them without forcing others to.

Teachers need a raise. That's a fact. But the way to go about it needs to improve district, not take away from it. The school board should consider the downsides of going paperless, and vote against Yasef's proposal.